United Nations E/2010/NGO/12

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 April 2010

Original: English

Substantive session of 2010
New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Alulbayt Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-33649 (E) 240510

Please recycle

Statement

Promoting women's education and employment as a means for promoting gender equality and empowerment

It is unfortunate that in the twenty-first century there is still a lack of education in some parts of the world for children and in particular for girls who find themselves without the equal opportunities that boys have. This is despite the two prominent Millennium Development Goals dedicated to universal education and gender equality. Our Foundation has projects to support education for girls, especially for orphans and the girl child. We also support the provision of opportunities for women in employment, most recently opening a sewing and crafts workshop in Baghdad, where women are trained and employed part-time, enabling them to dedicate time to families but still learn new skills and receive salaries that contribute to their household income.

However, there is still much to be done especially in countries where women face discrimination and where their rights are withheld by the State itself. We implore these States, particularly those that are made up of Muslim populations or for whom Islam is the State religion, to understand that preventing women having equal opportunities in education and employment is un-Islamic. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad Ibn Abdullah, peace be upon him and his progeny, has said in one of his most famous statements that seeking knowledge was an obligation on every Muslim, meaning both men and women. Why then do States that profess to respect Islam and run their State in line with its principles deliberately ignore this command?

Furthermore, women still face physical and psychological abuse, as a result of State discrimination and also as victims of political agendas. Some have their husbands taken away for months without knowing what for or when they will be back. Some women are not able to get jobs or go to university because of the ethnic or religious minority they belong to. The complicity of States, particularly those in North Africa, the Middle East and South-Western Asia in such destructive actions is well documented, but unfortunately still goes on. This goes against the rich tradition of Islam, as articulated by Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, who says in an instruction to his new governor in Egypt, Malik al-Ashtar: "Develop in your heart the feeling of love for your people and let it be the source of kindliness and blessing to them. Do not behave with them like a barbarian, and do not appropriate to yourself that which belongs to them. Remember that the citizens of the state are of two categories. They are either your brethren in religion or your brethren in kind".

In conclusion, we ask that the Economic and Social Council further press States to uphold the rights of women and to promote equal opportunities for education and employment, as declared by the Millennium Development Goals. We also ask that non-governmental organizations working towards this goal be supported, advised and encouraged.